

Message Text

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SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN REPORT

REF BOGOTA 0001

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

SUMMARY. CGLOMBIA'S PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN HAS OVER TEN WEEKS TO RUN UNTIL APR 21. THERE HAVE BEEN NO DRAMATIC CHANGES OF PACE OR STYLE SINCE OUR PREVIOUS ROUNDUP. THE LIBERAL CANDIDATE ALFONSO LOPEZ IS STILL CONCEDED TO BE IN THE LEAD AND DISCUSSIONS IN POLIT CIRCLES HAVE TURNED TO THE MARGIN OF HIS VICTORY, THE MAKEUP OF HIS CABINET AND WHAT ROLE THE CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE, ALVARO GOMEZ WILL PLAY IN THE COALITION REQUIRED BY THE CONSTITUTION. END SUMMARY

1. THE LIBERAL CANDIDATE ALFONSO LOPEZ MICHELSEN SPENT THE HOLIDAYS IN THE U S WHERE HE POLITICKED AMONG COLOMBIANS LIVING IN NEW YORK AND STOPPED IN WASHINGTON FOR TALKS WITH U S OFFICIALS AND THOSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES. UPON HIS RETURN TO COLOMBIA HE PICKED UP THE PACE OF HIS CAMPAIGN AND GAVE IT A NEW FLAVOR.

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HE ALWAYS ASSUMED HE WOULD WIN THE PRESIDENCY, BUT NOW HE IS TALKING

LIKE A PRESIDENT-ELECT; RECENTLY HE OFFERED THE CONSERVATIVES THE MIN OF GOVT AND THE POSTS OF COMPTROLLER AND ATTORNEY GEN, AN OLD PROPOSAL ORIGINALLY SET FORTH BY PRES PASTRANA.

2. THE CONSERVATIVE ALVARO GOMEZ HURTADO AND MARIA EUGENIA ROJAS DE MORENO OF ANAPO WERE ALREADY RUNNING HARD BEFORE THE NEW YEAR AND THEY CONTINUE TO MOVE AROUND THE COUNTRY HOLDING RALLY AFTER RALLY. CONSERVATIVE LEADERS CLOSE TO GOMEZ GIVE HIM A CHANCE; THE TERM THEY USE IS "TIENE POSIBILIDADES." HIS CHANCES REST ON FOUR MAIN FACTORS: 1) A LOW TURNOUT OF LIBERALS 2) A MASSIVE RETURN OF ANAPO ADHERENTS TO THE CONSERVATIVE FOLD 3) ANAPO AND UNO (LEFTIST COALITION) INROADS INTO THE LIBERAL VOTE AND 4) A DECIDED VOTER PREFERENCE FOR THE STATUS QUO THAT GOMEZ REPRESENTS. GOMEZ IS NOT OVERLOOKING ANY CHANCE TO CUT INTO LOPEZ' ASSUMED LEAD. FOR EXAMPLE WHEN INTEL REPORTS REACHED HIM THAT THE NORTH COAST, A LIBERAL STRONGHOLD, DID NOT APPEAR TO BE GREATLY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT LOPEZ, GOMEZ MOVED HIS CAMPAIGN TO THE COAST FOR TWO WEEKS, NOT WITH THE IDEA OF BEATING LOPEZ IN THE AREA, BUT IN AN ATTEMPT TO CUT THE LIBERAL MARGIN OF VICTORY. CONSERVATIVE LEADERS IN THE LARGE CITIES ARE USING THE SAME STRATEGY OF TRYING TO HOLD DOWN THE LIBERAL EDGE IN ORDER TO MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR STRENGTH IN RURAL AREAS. THE LIBERALS PROFESS UNCONCERN AT GOMEZ' STRATEGY. THEY MAINTAIN THAT HIS PRESENCE REMINDS PEOPLE OF HIS FATHER AND THAT HIS CAMPAIGN THEREFORE IS A NEGATIVE FACTOR. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT GOMEZ' CAMPAIGN, BASED AS IT IS ON IMAGE BUILDING IN THE U S STYLE, CAN HAVE NO APPRECIABLE EFFECT ON AN ELECTORATE THAT WILL VOTE LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE BECAUSE OF TRADITION.

3. LOPEZ RECENTLY RECEIVED THE RESULTS OF A PRIVATE POLL THAT GIVES HIM 2.8 MILLION VOTES, 2.1 MILLION FOR GOMEZ AND LESS THAN 600,000 FOR MRS MORENO. LOPEZ HAS SHOWN THE POLL TO A NUMBER OF FRIENDS, CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS ALIKE, WHO HAVE TOLD US THAT THE MARGIN OF VICTORY SHOWN IS TOO GREAT. LOPEZ SEEMS TO AGREE AND TALKS PUBLICLY OF WINNING 2,500,000 VOTES. PRIVATELY, HE IS BETTING HIS CONSERVATIVE FRIENDS THAT HIS MARGIN OVER GOMEZ WILL BE AT LEAST 400,000 VOTES. THEY IN TURN HAVE WAGERED HIM THAT GOMEZ WILL LOSE BY LESS THAN 100,000 VOTES. THIS VIGNETTE IS INDICATIVE OF AN ALMOST UNIVERSAL BELIEF HERE LOPEZ CANNOT LOSE, NOT BECAUSE OF HIS EFFORTS BUT BECAUSE HE IS A LIBERAL.

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MEANWHILE, A GOMEZ-DIRECTED POLL CARRIED OUT IN DEC SHOWS THE CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE WITH 1.8 TO TWO MILLION VOTES AGAINST 1.6 TO 1.8 MILLION FOR LOPEZ, 800,000 FOR MRS MORENO AND 300,000 FOR HERNANDO ECHEVERRI OF UNO. THE GOMEZ FORCES ARE CONVINCED THEY HAVE A CHANCE AND PLAN TO FIGHT HARD TO THE VERY END.

4. THE LIBERALS ARE JUST NOW GEARING UP FOR WHAT PROMISES TO BE A MASSIVE CAMPAIGN IN BOGOTA, THE SEAT OF LIBERAL HOPES FOR A BIG

WIN. THEY HOPE TO GARNER 500,000 VOTES IN THE CAPITAL. SOME LIBERALS CLAIM THAT UNLESS CARLOS LLERAS GETS INVOLVED, LIBERALS IN BOGOTA WILL NOT TURN OUT IN GREAT NUMBERS. THE FORMER PRESIDENT REMAINS SILENT AND HAS GONE ABROAD FOR CONFERENCES AND CONSULTING WORK.

5. GOMEZ IS ADHERING TO HIS STRATEGY OF NOT PROVOKING A LIBERAL BACKLASH, TRIES TO AVOID CONFRONTATIONS WITH LOPEZ AND MAKES PROMISES OF HELP TO EACH LOCALITY IN WHICH HE SPEAKS. HE IS STICKING TO HIS GAME PLAN OF HOLDING OUT THE PROSPECT OF DOMESTIC PEACE AND PROSPERITY BASED ON INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY AND NO TAMPERING WITH THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE. LOPEZ CONTINUES TO BE VAGUE, AS BEFORE, BUT INCREASINGLY USES GOMEZ AS A COUNTERPOINT TO HIS UNDEFINED THEME OF SOCIAL CHANGE. LOPEZ HAS ABANDONED HIS INTELLECTUAL APPROACH TO THE COST OF LIVING ISSUE AND NOW TELLS HIS AUDIENCES OUTRIGHT HE WILL BATTLE INFLATION AND THE HIGH COST OF LIVING. ANOTHER THEME HE IS HITTING IS CORRUPT GOVT. MORE AND MORE FREQUENTLY HE ATTACKS GOMEZ' STATED POLICY OF DEVELOPMENTALISM, CALLING IT THE SURRENDER OF THE NATION INTO THE HANDS OF A FEW.

6. THE NAPO CANDIDATE MRS MORENO IS WORKING AS HARD AS EVER BUT IT IS BECOMING APPARENT THAT LACK OF FUNDS AND GOMEZ' STRATEGY OF WOING CONSERVATIVE ANAPISTAS ARE TAKING THEIR TOLL. THE CANDIDATE OF UNO, THE LEFTIST COALITION, HERNANDO ECHEVERRI MEJIA, IS NOT NOW GIVEN A CHANCE OF OBTAINING MORE THAN 200,000 VOTES, DESPITE GOMEZ' PRIVATE POLL, WHICH IS PROBABLY SKEWED TO REFLECT THE CONSERVATIVE OUTLOOK. THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATE, HERMES DUARTE HAS MADE ALMOST NO EFFORT TO CAMPAIGN AND ONLY RECENTLY BEGAN TO RECEIVE COVERAGE IN THE MEDIA, WHICH SEEKS HIM OUT AS A CURIOSITY ITEM. HE SPENDS MOST OF HIS TIME IN SANTANDER WHERE HE IS A PROFESSOR OF ENGINEERING AT THE INDUSTRIAL UNIV.

7. IN MID-JAN THE GOVT AND THE CONSERVATIVE AND LIBERAL PARTIES AGREED TO THE CREATION OF A BODY KNOWN AS THE "TRIBUNAL DE GARANTIAS" CONFIDENTIAL

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TO ENSURE THE PURITY OF THE ELECTION AND INVESTIGATE ALL CHARGES OF FRAUD AND VIOLENCE. REPS OF ALL FIVE CANDIDATES HAVE ACCEPTED MEMBERSHIP ON THE TRIBUNAL, WHICH WAS FORMALLY CONSTITUTED ON JAN 31. WE UNDERSTAND THAT PRES PASTRANA WULD LIKE TO SEE THE TRIBUNAL HAVE DISCIPLINARY POWERS, BUT MANY OBSERVERS FEEL THE BODY IS LITTLE MORE THAN WINDOW DRESSING. BY LAW, ONLY CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS MAY BE APPOINTED TO ACT AS OFFICIALS AT POLLING PLACES. VIOLENCE IS STILL NOT A SERIOUS PROBLEM, ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN CLASHES BETWEEN CONSERVATIVES AND ANAPISTAS.

8. THE ISSUANCE OF CEDULAS, THE ONLY DOCUMENT VALID FOR VOTING
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